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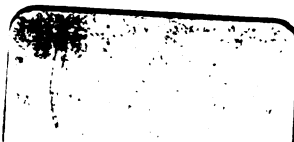


FROM THE BEQUEST OF

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TIRESIAS.

TIRESIAS

BY

THOMAS WOOLNER

=

AUTHOR OF "MY BEAUTIFUL LADY," "PYGMALION,"

"SILENUS."



LONDON :
GEORGE BELL AND SONS, YORK STREET,
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Shapleigh fund

CHISWICK PRESS :--C. WHITTINGHAM AND CO. TOOKS COURT,
CHANCERY LANE.

TO EMILY KEY.

*Will you grace by your acceptance this
story of Tiresias?*

*In our "age of mechanical arts and
merchandize," your love of verse is grateful
as a garden in a populous city, where the
flowers yet blossom and the birds sing.*

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BOOK I.

TIRESIAS.

PALLAS Athena, perfect, powerful, Wise !
As Gods revered art thou, O Chariclo ;
And less of mortal than a life divine ;
At all times having served Her lofty hest.
Therefore, O Mother, soothed by thee to peace,
I on thy bosom weeping dare disclose
The story of my blindness born of light.

Half the day long had I been in pursuit
Of one wide-antlered stag, that oftentimes
Passed me within an easy range, or stood
Proudly at gaze, prick-eared, snuffing the wind.
Oft raised my bended bow ; but ere I drew
The arrow backward to its biting point,

I paused for pity, as the creature bent
His clear full gaze on mine : and ever he
Within these lapses turned from me and fled.
At length this faltering in my hunter craft
So shamed my practice I unstrung my bow,
And thought of home : but first the Fates de-
creed

My feet to wander into ways obscure ;
Between gaunt rocks, and overshadowing trees
Whose twisting rootage gripped the rocks like
prey ;

By shrubs whose shrewd incline seemed ques-
tioning ;

Where rills thro' clefts came spurting in disdain,
Then vanished haughtily amid the flowers
That peered with saucy looks or sidewise smile ;
All seeming aliens in my native land,
And I intrusive on their privacy ;
While thro' the silence of the steadfast woods,
Afar-off, sad, one solitary croak
Was answered by another more remote.

What meant this daylight mystery, and murk
Of cloying, dull stagnation in my blood ?

Had I given chase to hart of Artemis,
And angering Her, the Huntress keen, been
smit

With lifelong tremor for unconscious crime ?
A grim high-shouldered boar of shining tusks,
And graceful fir-tree, young, with slender shoots,
Must straightway be my offering at Her shrine,
While, contrite, meekly I beseech Her grace !

This reverent spirit, Mother, nerved my
strength

Like breezes from the sea, and bore me on
Where lay the land, whose favouring bosom beat
All tremulous, there welcoming with smiles
To her embrace the ardent gazing sun ;
And, looking back, I saw the woodland wane
To blank and vanish into mist away.

In newborn exaltation, as tho' wings

Lifting my brows had raised me from myself,
I came to where a yawning ridged ravine,
Rill-streaked, and breathing vapour, closed in
gloom.

Adown this ridged descent I leapt my way,
Certain of footfall, lightly as a bird.
Thro' tangled bushes thrall'd in eglantine
I strove unbaffled, when a vale of grass,
Quivering in flower and parted by a stream,
That bore the sunshine on its winding way,
With sudden beauty held me motionless.

Why went I not a down-stream wanderer,
Pacing in measure to the river-song ?

Fate; with resistless hand then clasping mine,
Enticed me upward, and ordained that I
Never again might wander with the flow !

On in pleased conflict with the thronging
flowers,
Taking their golden tribute as I went ;
Across fresh rillets innocently clear ;
Grass, laced with thyme and smiles of gold and
blue,

To where I saw a rocky headland cleave
The river's margin and oppose advance.
Abruptly rose its smouldering naked flank,
And reached a forest where Titanic growth
Lay mixed in darkness with a world of cloud,
That eagles haunted circling till they poised,
And quitted not their station in the sky.

My heart, as tho' unleashed, sprang in my
breast

And checked my breath, "For there great Zeus,"

I knew,

"Or Pallas, His great daughter, was below,
Their eagles watching Them !"

Audaciously

Skirting the rock, I trod a crescent lawn
Of brilliant emerald, screened by shadowy trees ;
Then, while in marvel why so quenched and
lone

I shrank in precincts of Elysian calm,
I heard a wondrous splash, as tho' some wing
Had struck the water with a sudden beat.

Awe-smitten, kneeling in bewildered fear,
I felt the presence of a God.

Lo, high,
Leaning against an oak, Athena's spear
Pulsed fiercely, edge and point ! The golden
scales

That guard Her breast, a shimmering net of flame,
Lay with Her garment by the Gorgon shield,
Its visage turned in mercy toward the tree.
But how to tell of great Athena's Self,
When She in overwhelming stately power,
With light inscrutable, before me shone !

Resplendent from the water, on the grass,
Within a shower of trembling sparkles She
Stood wringing out the river from Her hair.
Stretching Her hand to shake the drops away,
She showed the length, the strength, the rounded
glow

Of beauty gleaming in Her mighty arm ;
And hallowed, twin in glory, proudly rose

Her sacred bosom lifted loftily.
While living radiance round Her presence clung
And moved in faithful concord as She turned
And bent Her gaze on mine. O not in scorn,
Approval, nor surprise ; but as a star,
Serene, remote; and unapproachable,
Beams upon water troubled in the wind.
And I in worship strove to penetrate
Deep in the brightness of those azure heavens,
But felt their lustre pierce into my brain,
And I myself in darkness ; evermore
Closed from adventure in the world of men.
Since that dark hour, I say it not in pride,
I have not tasted life nor known regret.

BOOK II.

CHARICLO.

THOU art Tiresias, my hapless son,
Tho' sad indeed, yet more than others blessed.
Thy guides for ever gone from this dark life
Wherein we stumble, tho' our sight be keen;
A need the poorest creeping things enjoy,
And Gods themselves cannot restore when lost.
Great Pallas, wise Athena heard my prayer,
And granted that which makes thee more than
man :

Yea, made thee as the Gods with power to see
Determined courses rule far times to come ;
But made thee not as Gods with power to aid
The due fulfilment of Their wills divine.
Tho' thus denied ; and men seem unto thee

As fevered victims in their chase for power ;
Yet happily their tumult canst thou shun
For blossoming sweets that breathe around thine
home,

Within whose shadow, smiling, dwells content.

Thy fateful glimpse of Wisdom left thee dazed
And listless from thy terrible delight :
Regardful, I discerned thine eyes were clear,
Without a wound or scar to mark their scath,
But taking shapes as mirrors void of life.
Ah, could I brook thee mine, but one of those
Who eat and sleep, and only sleep and eat !
Faith fired the hope my Goddess might in-
cline

To hear the prayer of suffering Chariclo ;
And, strong in resolution, timidly
Her temple steps ascending, bent I down
Before Athena's statue, where I wept.
The lifelong issue or of joy or woe,
Awe weighted me to silence while I kissed
The ground made sacred by Her sandalled feet.

I strove to make each sentence close and true
To urge my supplication piercingly,
Lest its defect should cause thy suit to fail
And leave thee hapless.

“Goddess loved,” I cried,
“We know Thine owls, that blink in films, more
wise
Than all the fluttering birds that haunt the day,
And sleep at dusk with bill pushed under wing.
When wasteful mice, unwelcome, taint the stores
Of corn our anxious men have heaped by toil,
Thy mute-winged favorites, sure of claw, descend,
Seize and devour the tiny plunderers.

“Thy serpents, lithe as winding water, glide,
And moving watchful with attentive eyes
Are wisely silent till a danger threatens,
When, hissing terror, they recoil and gape,
And, breathing horror, fright away the foe.

“Thy birds of battle crow to greet the morn,
Or challenge rivals to a gallant main ;

Defending chick and dame, with wing and spur
They front the prowling fox and strike him dead.

“ Enriching food, and mitigating pain,
Thine olives, more to man than horse or kine,
Cheer him with light, and shield his tender flesh
Against the sun at noon and wintry chill ;
And make a woodland meet for loitering
When fall at eventide the shadows cool.

“ Kindly to man and his desires art Thou ;
But kindest when, decisive Monitress,
Directing him on narrow perilous paths !
So gracious in Thy justice, ah, vouchsafe
One beam of mercy on Tiresias,
Darkling from light's excess, O Loved, Revered !
For when by Fate impelled, when rapt he gazed
Near on Thy very loveliness, thro' light
Thy beauty shed, his mortal sight gave way
In utter gloom, and left him but as one
Helpless and hopeless in a dungeon bound.
Lift him from darkness into radiant day ;
To freedom, joy ; O bring him back to life ! ”

Athena heard me. Her divine response
Came as the marshalled spirits of a dream ;
Immortal following Immortal feet,
As star on star successive close in light,
And spacious wonder shining fills the heavens.

“ Severely fortune smote Tiresias,
When he beheld Me neither clad for war,
Nor in the garment worn beneath My mail ;
For as I glowing from the river sprang
The Gods themselves could scarce behold Me
thus !

And mortal vision lacks the strength to bear
The lustre of My presence unassuaged.
Therefore thy son was blinded, and remains
In outer darkness till his days are done.
As voices mute can never sing again,
The Gods are powerless to recover power ;
But injured worth receiving sure amends,
Tiresias, gladdened by immortal light,
The time, ere he beheld Me verily,

Shall seem uncertain, and a wavering mist,
Where hovered vague inexplicable shapes,
In phantom mimicry of restless man,
Building up palaces with crumbling towers,
And sailing fleets to sea-washed mountain crags
That fold their tops in cloud ; where trampling
 hosts

Without a sound in ghostly combat close,
And high-walled towns are captured by surprise.
Where whirlwinds spin ripe harvest into ruin ;
And ever-striving ever ends in waste,
Until thro' heaven a sword of sunshine cleaves
The shrinking vapour down and strikes the
 earth,

When, softly melting, opens forth the day !

Blest in this light will your Tiresias dwell,
And, Godlike, thro' the tangle of desires,
Shall mark its value in an aim pursued,
And balance cost against the substance won.

Now are his inborn hopes for ever fled !
But cheered by Truth's imperishable smile ;

Aloof from strife, well knowing craft and strength,
Unceasing struggle for ascendancy,
He shall, forecasting issues, now behold
The future fixed and certain as the past.
His sayings shall be winged with prophecy !
Fulfilment following prescience, in due course
He will be honoured as the living voice
Discoursing Destiny and laws divine !

Tho' towns arisen in splendour from the earth
Are worn to dust by Time's unheeded feet,
Time cannot, nor can God-compelling Fate
Once overthrow a wise man's simple word ;]
Whose wisdom mellowing slowly age by age
Augments the treasures of futurity.

But nerves must tingle to the touch of joy ;
Piping and dancing after labour done !
As now Tiresias can watch no more
The shining clouds nor shadows they let fall ;
The many-coloured garb of spring to him
Being but as winter's gray, his vision closed :
I will the hindrance from his ears withdraw,

And then your son shall understand the birds,
Their music, and the meaning in their songs :
And with these blest ones, in their lovely lives
Rejoicing, he will know his vanished world
But as the memory of a raging war
Where sang and whistled arrows carrying death.

BOOK III.

TIRESIAS.

O MOTHER, careless ears can never learn
Nor rightly ponder words of mighty Gods !
His watch must constant be, his spirit meek
Whose will with Their's unflagging would keep
pace.

Weak dalliance shuns he, and the lavish grape,
And dares not spur dark passion to attain
The reigning heights few clamber but to fall ;
For unto him pursuits of fretful men,
Unconsecrated by divine intent,
Shall seem a dance of folly, or a chase
That finds disaster, or the quarry fled.

(Apart from men I now am less than they,

The active, who beat substance into shape,
Or guide the streams of power ; but more am
blest

In fortune ; for, by contact unbegrimed
In the foul reek of contest, I maintain
My force unwasted by antagonism ;
And clearly know at what they darkly grope,
Or vainly guess.

Sometimes when faint, and hope
Reluctantly folds over-wearied wings,
And I am fain in peaceful death to cease,
That vision of Her glowing purity
Transmutes my sorrow into secret joy !

To these blank eyes the outer world is blank ;
The pale blue hills afar, beneath my feet,
The happy flowers alike are blank to me.
But pastures ever rich in flowers divine,
Unfading, lustrous, of ethereal hue,
Are mine, and cheer the margin where a
stream,

Brimmed with celestial light, for ever flows
Toward some great ocean washing nameless
shores.

O Mother, from the rough and roaring
world,

I feel as one now safe on blessed earth;
Borne thitherward by savage billows churned
And gnashed to foam betwixt the teeth of
rocks!

Impious indeed it were to think it truth;
But I have known such evil wrought meseemed
The Gods had left their power to evil men;
Or that dark Chaos ruling meant to strike
These slaves corrupted into endless night!

Think but of Titias, whose continual tongue
Assailed our Council, and revealed the faults
They dared not for high dignity resent,
And thus lay at the mercy of this daw;
Until at length descrying plain escape,
They smiled in easy unanimity.

Straightway they shipped him for a distant
clime,

To govern stout adventurers from our shores,
Who, thriven by labour, waxed content and glad
There he, by substituting pettish will
For treaties fixed, embroiled the state in war
That cost our armies sore to save our sons.
When here at length disgust to clamour raged,
And Titias was recalled ; the pecking beak,
Again triumphant, made the Council quail.
To rule a wealthy isle they sent him, where,
Warmly enamoured of his own intent,
Some factions pressing hard, and fostering
Their crafty rivals, fanned he smouldering hate
That burst outright in open massacre ;
And he in terror from the fell results
That chase ungainly skill, took ship and fled.
Our Council, uninstructed by events,
Sent him again to rule a greater charge,
Where now he plots to worst and circumvent,
And hatch disasters dire in natural course.

Thus our dishonoured Guides, from cowardice,
To shun a pertling daw that pecked their heels,
Have thrice their trust betrayed. Thrice on fair
Peace

Begotten wrong, and war, and massacre!
Thrice violated their own sacred Charge!
Yea, thrice while slumbering within their care!

Contrast Pylaoon's with this Titias' fate.
Pylaoon's gentle voice and courtesy
Warmed every heart to measure with his
own.

Yet soft of touch he held in Titan grip
The state's advantage and our honour pledged.

Once on a time, ruling a dangerous tribe
In some wild far-away dependency;
While war in many flames between our sons
And natives fiercely raged; Godlike, inspired,
Pylaoon gathering in his whole command,
Sent them with all his trained and bravest
chiefs

To aid our brethren in their bitter hour ;
Leaving himself, and dearer yet than self,
Bereft of power save an unflinching will,
Alone amid the lately conquered who,
Cunning and stern, were scarcely tamed to law.
Such was the man.

Our Council driven by need
Of firm authority and kindly craft,
Sent great Pylaon to a troubled land
To soothe some factions there, whose differing
aims
Issued unhindered in continuous strife.

When there Pylaon, as a warrior, scanned
His foes before him marshalled for assault,
And swiftly marching on them unforeseen,
Delivering his own forces breaks their ranks
And rolls them backward on their native wilds.
For thus, by prowess and perfected skill,
He brought contention to a welcome close ;
And promised plenty flowered the slopes of
peace.

Pylæon thus was kneading their rude lives
Surely to fashion of an ordered state,
When here some money-bags, athirst for praise,
Puffed chatterers vain with cross-grained para-
dox,
Flattering the people's ear with fallacies,
And undigested rumour, raised a storm
Of howling hate against his noble name ;
And our half-hearted caitiff rulers cast,
To save their fondled popularity,
Cast forth their noblest to these howling
wolves !

Throughout that troubled province yet again
Ramp dock and thistle where they choke the
corn ;

Stray torrents rut the road ; the watercourse,
Checked by accumulated tangle, spreads,
And overflowing meadows soak to swamp ;
Men frown and leave their useful husbandry,
The silent plough, the music of the flail ;

Dark herds that teem increasing opulence,
The bleating cries from fields and pasture
lands,

They leave and swelter in the fields of war;
Where they, instead of sweet productive showers,
Meet showers that carry grisly wounds and
death;

Instead of milk, that quenches thirsting toil,
Comes the fell thirst is only quenched in blood.

He, my Pylaon, gentle, learned, wise;

Whose dearest pastime was the work ordained;

Who lived to shape, augment, and purify;

By clamour driven from his usefulness

Into an empty name! Ingratitude

From those he served had chilled the hero's
soul,

And curdled thro' his frame the generous blood,

Beating no more attuned to high resolve,

But shrunken as a brook, when after drought

No longer singing on its wonted way.

He left us while that furious tempest raged,

"Killed by the sudden cold," the mourners
said :

But he was slain by shameful cowardice,
And broken-hearted our Pylon died.

Wretches are honoured now, and heroes slain.
Is there then no appeal, O Chariclo ?
Can crime thus vault and yet the race endure ?
These sons of glory, favoured of the Gods,
Thus slain and unavenged !

From age to age
Run stories of a mighty day when Greeks
Were God-directed, and when men obeyed.
But when I strive to pierce the black abyss
Of unborn time I see but shameful shades !
O, sight of horror ; rent that blank abyss !
Where, thunder-armed, the great Olympian
Gods

All breathe indignant vengeance as one face,
And storm their chariots over thundering plains ;

Forth stream their hissing bolts, speed swift
their shafts ;

In lines of lightning sing their angry spears !
And flanking hard move strange stupendous
Shapes

Who, plucking splintered rocks, and forest trees,
Dash cities out of being at a blow ;
And monstrous creatures leap whose caverned
jaws

Crash and make havoc on distracted flocks.
Last famine stalks close linked with pestilence ;
And blight that chars the traversed space like
flame.

The Gods have gone and left the smitten
land,

Where lies their anger black in ghastly heaps ;
All left of Greeks and their intolerant pride ;
Their haughty sages and heroic chiefs ;
Their beauty fairer than sweet flowers in bloom ;
Their Temples, where the only sacrifice

Was flesh of beast and gold-bought offering ;
Their palaces, where dwelt unkingly kings
Who throve in costly state, and could not
rule ;

Now all have vanished like a waking dream
That leaves a growing taint of certainty
Its visions but foreshadowed danger near.
Uprising slowly in that wasted scene
Crawl dwindled forms in search for something
hid,

That keeps their faces spell-bound near the
soil ;

Anon, in mockery of ancient deeds
They seem a world of phantoms lacking life.

My gift of gazing thus on pictured doom,
Is but a doubtful boon, O Chariclo !
However crime corrupt our rulers' blood,
However basely are their wills obeyed,
However dire the vengeance justly due,

Alas, the speeding thunderbolts, that burst
Among the guilty, likewise overwhelm
With woe, or crush the guiltless into ruin !

Stern, unrelenting are the Gods, and mark
That man accursed ; mark him for ever cursed
Who lifts a knave to high authority,
And drives the hero from his sacred trust.

And ever must our mortal race endure
The chastisement Fate wills, and angry Gods
Ordain for men unfaithful to their charge.
Abject and haughty, both alike as one
Swept unappealably to nothingness.

Heedless of frowning Doom's unfaltering eye,
Lightly they laugh ; they wave their arms
abroad

And cry, " This good old earth and all her fruit
Are ours of right ; then let us every one
Enjoy the fragrant juices of the vine ;

Clasping fair woman let us round the dance,
And dance together until sunken day
Leaves us a safe example, where the stars
Still burn in glory and rejoice the night !
For now, the waves away, sand smooth and
dry,

The beaming Hours will not our arms escape
Till taxed of rosy smile and sweeter kiss,
And lips made redder with the crimson
draught.

Thus, fondling beauty, her new-quicken'd
breath

Runs thro' our veins in swift delicious fire ;
Until our rapture slacken in repose,
And languor lapt by music softly sleep."

On the warmed beach they breathe the summer
wind,

And wear a transient pallor of the moon,
Where sprinkled snug, like sheep ere breaking
dawn,

They rest in dreams of never-ending bliss.
And meanwhile rising clear from ocean gloom,
Creeps, white-lipped, hissing, the returning
tide.

BOOK IV.

CHARICLO AND TIRESIAS.

"WHEN preening downy breasts the water-
fowl

Quiver, ere spreading timorous wings to rise
From water freshened with the breath of morn,
And span the dazzled distance into space ;
So freshly wing our lives Tiresias,
So bright with promise are the days to come."

"O Mother, grateful sound! Fair are thy
words ;

And touch me as pale shivering in the leaves
Whispers of rainy wind on scorching days,
Before the summer showers on meads athirst
Awaken hushed and grateful murmurings ;

So thirsting I thy pleasant accents take,
And like the warblers roundabout I hear
I would in music like to their's respond !

“ That vision of annihilated Greeks,
Tho' justly due to vengeance, wrings my heart.
Save for my strange God-stricken destiny,
Could I not hope by mixing much with men,
Thro' clear, persuasive, seasonable words,
To reach their temper at the wavering pause ;
And, gently aiding undetermined bent,
To turn their footsteps into settled ways
Approved by wisdom, and of Gods beloved !
But now, alas, unable, I discern,
Dimly as thro' a veil, our people range
Disorderly wide trackless waste, with eyes
Hard set on fancies they have cast before,
To find delusive nothing in their grasp ;
Or phantoms fair that smile and lure advance,
Till seized at length they change to demons dire
And rend them out of life ! ”

"Thy words ring true

And tuned on tender chords, Tiresias!

But the dread Goddess, is Her charge forgot?

Not lightly will She pardon shouldst thou fail

In reverent concord with Her will divine.

Thine own bow in obedience, nor allow

Winged hopes to hover where they may not rest;

For Gods despise the foolish tears of men

Born of unchecked desire. No, let the vain

Hither and thither gad a senseless dance,

Their course of no more count than wind-borne
leaves.

Exalted, thou shalt know the living truth

Athena signified, and sun thy soul

In ever-varying beauty born of law

That love, wing-folded from pursuit, adores.

It is not thine to toil and herd with men,

Who fondly trust they track their purposes,

But are blind shuttles in the loom of Fate,

Each working out his doom. Thy deathless
glance

Of Pallas great Athena's very self,
 Enwraught thee Her's in worship evermore :
 For having seen perfection in pure light,
 No earthly memory can seem to thee
 Other than darkness shown by glimmering
 rays,

Or form unfashioned yet to comely shape.
 Thy mortal loss being thus immortal gain,
 Saved art thou now the dolour and despair
 Of seeing wounds thou lackest skill to heal ;
 Or tottering blindness that will not be led ;
 And, breathing air attempered to response,
 The voices of the high Olympian Gods
 Shall sanction thine in music with Their own."

"Take, take, O Mother, take my trembling
 thanks !

As beat his heart who clomb to weary heights
 When blew the gracious zephyrs round his brow ;
 So braced by loving words, my life rebounds
 Within obedient range, and gathers strength)

(To pace the lonely path prescribed by Fate,
Athena's self disclosed.

“ Once on a day,
Upon the ledge of rock that overhangs
Where one huge torrent thrills the mountain-
cleft,
I lay and listened to the constant roar
Of leaves and water musically mixed,
And heard high voices of the earth and air,
Discourse of stars, and whisper of the force
That vomits blocks of fire, or by a smile
Clusters the primroses to living light.
Rapt thus lay I and wondered.

As they kiss,
Are tempests fired with transport mortals feel
When eager lips unite? Or, is it hate,
When in mad thunder rushing they expire!

“ While thus by strangeness lured, or beauty
caught ;

Where secrets opened to my will, or closed
For future pondering in some happy hour ;
More purely blew the wind ; a glory smote
These sightless balls as on that day of doom
When I beheld Her silent on the grass
And clad in light alone. But now Her voice
Pierced me with music, such as wildest love
Could never hope for utterance, tho' his fate
Hung in the balance of a blissful word.

“ ‘ Hail my Tiresias, to the Gods endeared !
Thy thoughts wing happily an even pace,
And happily alight to muse their gains.
Thy swift exultant march cut off and balked
By sheer impossibility,
Thou didst not dash thy breast against the wall,
And bruised and bleeding, clamour unto Gods
For aid to break the laws themselves obey ;
But meek, submissive, paid'st thy forfeiture
Without rebellious questioning, or hope
The will of Gods might change for thy behoof.

Thus, tho' perforce a rugged path is thine,
Thy quickened sense shall be to thee a staff
To guide thee on thy way : for thou shalt feel
The wandering air, checked by the rocks and
trees,

Beat backward on thy face ; and steadfastly
Threading obstructions, as a bird in flight,
Pursue thy needs in safety as before.

“ ‘ When silvery dawn warms into golden day
And hearts of men are glad, the feathered world
In voices infinite salute the morn ;
And stooping their horned brows the cattle
graze

With faces toward the sun ; their manes asweep,
Horses while thundering over plains proclaim
Their joy aloud in stormy clarion shouts ;
While flocks at feed upon the happy hills,
Pause at short intervals to bleat delight ;
And all awakened glow in life renewed
From dark unfeeling night. And thou shalt
wake

From gloom to living glory ; truth on truth
Unfolding lovely secrets to thy love,
Shall breathe their rarest sweetnesses unsought ;
When thou shalt learn that loveliness in flowers
Is one with women and their gracious smiles ;
And crawling eyeless worms that feed on clay
Own life identical with scornful man ;
And woodland berries, fed on earth and air,
And every drop of dew that weights the grass
Is fashioned by the force that moulds the stars.

“Clear to the wise, but hidden from the
dull,

All life unites inspired by harmony,
From inborn essence to the outward hue ;
And life, tho’ ever-varying, onward moves
From earth thro’ herbage and becomes the
brute :

Thus men from earth divine the laws of heaven,
And seek by day the stars in deepest wells,
Tho’ oft, by noon-sun dazzled, blind to flowers
In constellations shining at their feet !

“Thy soul responsive to their warbling tongues
Thou hear'st the stories little songsters tell
On thorns bloom-smothered in the odorous
spring,

And read'st their merry-making poured aloof
In veiled security of loftiest leaves,
Or quivering upward singing into light.
Their witchery cast upon thy loosened lips
Shall tell in singing what was caught of songs
Tuned deep in woodland shade, or windy banks,
Or fields of spacious air. As now thine eyes
Are closed to every being of thy love,

Thou now art granted vision, grace divine

—To penetrate and know each dark recess,
From subtle motives to their plain escape
In action issuing to remotest time,

And men shall be thy friends, in knowing thou
Can'st rightly scan what unto most will seem
An untold message or a senseless vaunt.

Thy sway shall be as kings'. Wise men shall take
Direction from thy maxims, proven and found

Trusty upon the strain, and furtherance
To purposes that strike and flower in deeds.
For thou, undoubting, undismayed, shalt know
The will of Gods, and speak the voice of Fate ;
Resistless Fate for ever following fast
On any trodden pathway, foul or fair !

“ ‘ But many a harvest moon shall light the
land,

And many a season will release its showers,
And gather night in midday thunderstorms,

~~Ere~~ men will give a welcome to thy words ;

For, as at peril, will they start, and shun
The plainest blessing pregnant with delight,
When seen in guise unknown to them before.

But meantime can’st thou loiter while the
grass

Plays to the pleasant singing of the rain ;
And join in laughter when tempestuous fire
Rioting shatters throughout iron skies
In far redoubled roars that shake the world,
And rends an azure emptiness in space.

Flower-laden winds shall breathe and whisper
thee

If over primroses or violets borne,
Or deeply-blushing roses sore ashamed,
To languish zephyr-plundered of their sweets.
Softly, with babbling lips, these winds shall lisp
Of timorous lovers glimmering in the dawn,
And sighing for noontide's unattainable
Delight of brightest heaven. Or they shall tell
Of streams, where golden-hearted lotus flowers
Shed spectral light beneath the gloom of
palms ;

Where dusky women launch their babes to
float,

Then in the water flashing breast the flow ;
Or bring dark hints of contest from afar
Where numbers meet in fell resolve to smite
Each unknown other into senseless death.

“‘And thus in beauty hallowed safe art
thou

From cares that poison gladness with distrust,

And doubts of danger that may never rise :
But open, unobstructed, as the flow
Of mighty rivers, will thy seasons glide,
That wind by many a reach of flowery mead
To find like others their great ocean home.'

" Athena spake no more ; and then I seemed
To traverse airily the boundless waves,
Wind-borne thro' space and penetrating light,
That glorified my being as the flowers
Are glorified by morn. The Goddess' words
Still singing by me, underneath my feet,
In shoals the wondrous creatures of the deep,
Of richest hues and silvery brightness sped,
By huge ones followed swiftly and devoured.
And passing over cities I beheld
Great nations spread and cover smaller states,
And flourish into temples, towers, and fleets ;
Then coil themselves together, leopard-like,
To watch with evil eyes should any chance
Relax some other's guard, or weight his lids

In sleep, and give the fatal vantage sought.
Afar then I descried an eagle swoop
And strike a great swan soaring dead to earth ;
But being near man's home, the eagle fled
Until the sun grew crimson, then returned
To gorge his prey ; marked by a fowler, who
Hard by in ambush with a ready bow,
Pierced his fierce heart with death. The fowler,
proud,

Boasting of twofold spoil and subtle skill,
Hoisted the prize for praises from his dame ;
But she, cross-grained, upbraided him for loss
And waste on eagles, worthless on the board,
When all his children cried with hungry maws !
To her sharp tongue he daring no reply,
And needing solace, roundly beat his babes.

“Such the strange pastime of that mighty
world

I have for ever lost. Where beauty dies
Fresh in her dawn of trustful innocence,
Mammocked by ruthless force and cast away ;

Where wise men bow unhonoured heads, while
fools,

In loud-pitched shouts, assert that Wisdom's
ways

Are better now forgot for pathways new,
Obvious and sweeping. Where lithe Falsehood's
self,

Wearing a scanty garment filched from Truth,
Flaunts her bedizened foulness to the crowd,
Pronouncing Truth a worn-out blunderer,
Unneeded in this growing world of ours,
Where things so mixed and complex must be
touched

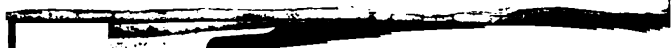
By lighter fingers, or their bloom will fly !
And gaping multitudes agrin with joy
Strain their deep throats to inharmonious howl ;
As wolves at midnight when they scent the fold,
And rage against her worthless purity,
Her worn-out useless rags. Tho' beaming clear
Her purity, clad in eternal light !

“ All this is darkness murkier than the gloom

Whereon these blank orbs dwell ; but when I
heard

The door, by which ye entered, opening, came
With thy dear voice the welcome joy of love,
And now, within mine arms, to hear and and feel
My home, the beating of thy tuneful heart,
I have no other wish, but rest content ;
Contented with my fate, and most with thee."

PART SECOND.



BOOK I.

CHARICLO AND TIRESIAS.

THE BIRDS.

" Throughout this wholesome air, Tiresias,
Refreshed and cleansed by rinsing midnight rain,
On every treetop, roof, or drifting cloud,
I hear the songsters twit and trill their lays
In notes so high and variably attuned
The morning's beauty brightens with their joy.

Altho' responsive to their dainty songs,
To me they are as babblings of a babe
That laughs for gladness, but can tell no more ;
Disclosing no intelligible tale,
As unto thee, Tiresias, who hear'st
Of innocent sweet love, and woodland wiles
Where sunlight plays within illumined shade."

48 CHARICLO, TIRESIAS, AND BIRDS. [PART II

"My well-loved Mother, as the Gods revered!
Truth brightly shines in jealous secrecy,
And clouds hang heavy round her dwelling
place,
But oft a momentary ray escapes,
And tempts conjecture thro' the tangled gloom,
We must await fair breezes to dispel.
Thus checked perforce, tho' happily I scan
The tales these songsters to each other sing,
I can translate them into words of speech
But haltingly, and with imperfect tongue,
That sounds as twittering noised at early dawn
To lusty warblings in the risen day."

"Describe, Tiresias, tho' in halting speech,
This linnet's rapturous trilling overhead;
His throbbing throat just seen among the leaves."

"To his blithe mate, shaking her feathers free,
After a lengthened sitting on her nest,
He tells the fury of the storm, and sings,

“ ‘I saw thee, as the storm grew nigh,
Half uncloze a dreamy eye
And let a moonbeam enter there.
Ah, was it fair
The moon should dare
To let her beams thus' peer and pry !

“ ‘And when the storm grew nearer still,
Thee I saw uplift thy bill
And sink down deeper in the nest ;
Not for the rest
To thy warm breast,
But saving thy loved eggs from chill !

“ ‘The raging storm upon us came ;
Thunder-voiced, in rosy flame
A vivid instantaneous glow ;
When up, down low,
Then to and fro
Wildly it swayed thy shivering frame.

“ ‘ Within thy nest I watched thee cling,
Stretching either side a wing ;
Thy fragile treasure fast concealing !
Thunder pealing,
Fire revealing
How fiercely swirling branches swing !

“ ‘ The tempest, fearing bright-faced day,
Fled in gusty sighs away ;
Ah, yet wert thou affright, or shy,
And did'st not vie
With me and fly
To sit and dance our favourite spray ! ’ ”

“ The fretful creature, jealous of the moon,
Could never understand, Tiresias,
That in no terror for herself she clung,
But over-anxious for the babes unhatched ! ”

“ Showing, dear Mother, tho' the tale is told,
It carries only vague significance,

Save thro' experience and sympathy.
At easy ranges aye these triflers flit
Round bush and tree ; and, haunting in the spring
Our upper lands, weave unregarded nests,
And utter little songs from hour to hour.

“ On yestereven, ere the sun went down,
I scaled the crags, for ever sacred, where
Pallas Athena's voice foretold my doom.
I lay and meditated feats unwrought
By daring men of parents yet unborn :
As one, while musing, sees a city rise,
Whose paven streets slope down to massive
quays ;
The rock, meanwhile, whence hewn the stone
must come,
For temples, towers, and palaces superb,
Untouched as yet of chisel, pick, or bar.
A city airy as a morning dream,
That grows to shape and harbours multitudes !
While thus I saw this phantom populace,
Urging alway in ceaseless ebb and flow,

52 CHARICLO, TIRESIAS, AND BIRDS. [PART II.

I heard a haughty pair of eagles croon ;
In trouble for a nestling that had fallen,
Breaking its unfledged winglet on the rock,
And marked for death ; as, thrall'd with damaged
limb ;

Tho' haply it might forage and escape,
Escape were hopeless, should perchance it
catch

A shepherd's eye ; as shepherds ever kill,
Or maim with cruel torture creatures rare.

" This danger lit ungovernable ire
In those grim parents : loudly then cried one :

" ' Woe to these sheepclad, hard, unsatisfied ;
Who stintless slay all born of earth and tide ;
Pursuing savagely through day and night,
For food and raiment less than for delight.

" They grow not feathers, hair, nor hardened
scales,
And naked are unsightly, lacking tails.

The veils they wear are torn from slaughtered
beasts,
Whose mangled carcasses they burn for feasts.

“‘They crouch bewildered when the tempest
flies;
They hear in thunder threats and mockeries!
But stalk and stare on every tranquil day,
As they would dare the sun to disobey!

“‘When hunger shrinks their empty maws in
pain,
Like wolves, or rats, or monsters of the main,
Should any chance or purpose make him bleed,
Straightway they seize and on their brother
feed.

“‘But late, within a boat, of oars unfinned,
Three were borne far from shore by stress of
wind,
Adrift without a sail. Two wore their prime ;
The other lacked some years of mating time.

54 CHARICLO, TIRESIAS, AND BIRDS. [PART II.

“ ‘ With foodless days and weakness grew desire
To quell the hunger gnawing them like fire ;
And where the famished boy exhausted lay,
I saw their glances ravenously play,

“ ‘ Then meet each other’s ; when the boldest
 spake,
“ We must not let him die ere he awake,
For his good blood we lose if he go dead : ”
“ Then wake and eat him now,” the other said.

“ ‘ Refreshed, consoled, they with a cheery laugh
The boy divided, taking each a half ;
Then gorged him day by day till all was gone,
And only bones left bleaching in the sun.

“ ‘ Then covertly, as hunger gnawed again,
And nought but dry white bones between the
 twain,

They watched each others' eyes with steadfast
gaze,
But neither spake. And thus for many days

“ ‘ Neither dared sleep, the other open-eyed !
Ofttimes would they so gradually slide
Near to each other, each would start and grip
His weapon's haft, and slowly backward slip.

“ ‘ Hunger and watch were weighted agony ;
They both were cursed ; and neither dared to
die
And end his torture, for the sickening dread
His foe would gladden on his flesh when dead.

“ ‘ Made blind by watching, deafened by fell
hate,
They cared for nothing but each other's fate ;
Nor saw a high-decked vessel by them pause,
Nor heard the sailors shout, and ask the cause

“ Those bones were lying there. Vaguely they
clutched,
And fell down both aswoon when they were
touched.

At length in harbour, carried by the gale,
They told the citizens their ghastly tale.

“ Tears ran amain in pity for their crime,
And dreadful issue during famine time.
No pity for the murdered boy was raised,
But all his murderers' endurance praised.

“ ‘ Laws rule the sheepclad ; law must be obeyed !
Forth sounds their hollow judgment, long
delayed,
“ Both must a little while in durance be,
Then, as the winds of heaven, may both go free ! ”

“ The other eagle snapped her angry beak,
‘ I grieve these sheepclad know the use of bows,
Or we might rule them as befits their worth ! ’

Scoffed she, and flapped her widespread wings.

I heard

Both then wing inland to the mountains far."

" 'Tis well, Tiresias, to learn how men's
Free actions falter seen by visions clear :
But fondly held illusions thus assailed,
May make us wiser tho' they make us sad.
Those solitary birds of kingly strength,
Watchful and sternly tender to their young,
Complete and perfect in the world they range,
Can feel but scanty tolerance for sin.

" Now loved one, read me those rich melodies,
Thrown unrestrained, of yonder nightingales,
Singing in rival ardour for her love
Who waits, bright-eyed, with keen attentive ear."

" ' O could I mightily stretch wings of power,
And beat with tempests thro' the sapphire sky,
To gather every sight
Seen by enraptured eagles soaring high !

Then thro' thy dreams at night,
When moonbeams glorify the slumbering hour,
To thee in consecrated apple-flower,
Warble the treasures of my stored delight !

“ ‘ How Iris strode athwart a stormy wood
And flushed with magic hues each trembling tree;
And from the mountain shone
Brighter than princess in array, when she
Before her father's throne,
Outshining all around her, wondering stood
'Mid dames and damosels, in timorous mood
Lest he, her chosen, failed to claim his own !

“ ‘ Or I would, sunrise-warmed, and passion-
strong,
Flit near and supplicate thee, Love, for grace,
Of thine accorded smile.
But should'st thou coldly from me turn thy face,
I would in gloom the while
There soothe an aching heart in lonely song,

In utterance swifter as the sorrows throng
On me, poor outcast of a flowerless isle !

“ ‘ And should some falcon peering thro’ the day,
In search of plunder for his greedy bill,
 Perchance my Love espy,
With startling cries would I the coppice fill,
 That her irradiant eye
Marking the peril, she might speed away,
And nestled close in odorous safety stay,
Till death there hovering had relieved the sky.

“ ‘ Responsive then in flight ; or side by side
While swayed around the palpitating glow
 Of fervid noontide sun,
Where gem-bespangled insects to and fro
 Flashed meteors, one by one,
In trackless webs to net some fiery bride ;
We would spray-seated watch them glancing
 wide,
A sylphic pageant, till their fates were spun !

60 CHARICLO, TIRESIAS, AND BIRDS. [PART II.

“ ‘ And next in secret fastness disappear
When forests slumber under shadowing night ;
 And wearied things asleep
May sleep and dread no predatory flight
 O’er water dark and deep,
Where fallen, drowned, the rounded moon lies
 sheer ;
Slipt down with all her glory from the sphere,
Her clouds about her in a shining heap !

“ ‘ Amid vast branches, blissful then to rest,
Where sighs the whispering hush of solitude.
 When flowers their beauty close
And dream in sweetness, when no fingers rude
 Can pluck their drooped repose.
Rejoicing then in an unburthened breast,
I’d sing how hearts that love are most unblessed
When hordes of doubt their loving hopes oppose !

“ ‘ Of worship, would I sing, that laughs at time,
And, winning gracious worth by added years,

Is loveliest in age !
By shouts would I disperse insidious fears
That deadly battle wage,
And swarm the hazards of a longed-for prime ;
For love shouts loudest in our happy clime
When flowers of spring wear greenest equipage !”

“ Now tell me what the rival sang, who ceased
Long ere the loudest plained his final notes.”

“ He sang of boundless food at his command,
That he would barter in exchange for love ;
And sang of freshets overhung with boughs
So dense in leaves they offered safe retreat
When danger down in drenching torrents fell.
To keep her fledgelings plump and satisfied,
He promised labour while the day endured,
When fondness kept her prisoner on the nest !”

“ Thus sings no slender graceful nightingale,
But some wag bullfinch, in a stolen disguise,
Fat, plain, and round, and justly prosperous !”

62 CHARICLO, TIRESIAS, AND BIRDS. [PART II.

“ Birds varying, O Mother, each from each,
As other two-legged beings of this world,
The poet nightingales are not exempt.
One sings the nuptials of the earth and air ;
The other praises forage without stint :
Proving an old saw, ‘ Many make a world ’ ;
And most are busiest in their own concerns,
As this near wren now twittering in the twigs.

“ In and out the boughs about,
Every leaf to scan ;
Dot and tittle, large and little,
Peck I what I can.

“ Neat and small, the pirates all,
Hunting pass me over ;
Brisk and shy, alert and sly,
Tricked the hungry rover !

“ Oft she, when my pretty hen
Sits upon her nest,

Hints to me, tho' I am free,
Basking there is best !

“ ‘Then in and out the boughs about,
Every leaf we scan ;
Dot and tittle, large and little,
Pecking what we can.’ ”

“ The wren is saved by insignificance,
And safe as humble-bees from stoop of kite.
Tell me, Tiresias, what yon throble sings ;
Whose rich, soft-throated notes are pacifying,
And reach us thro' the stillness winged with
peace ! ”

“ He cheers his sitting partner with a tale
Of how her thrushlets will, when dauntless grown,
Outsing their rivals in the strife of song ! ”

“ ‘ I laud, I laud my speckle-bosomed Love !
O tawny-tinted, swart, and bounteous breast

64 CHARICLO, TIRESIAS, AND BIRDS. [PART II.

Sheltering our blue delights! In their warm nest
Unbroken, pure ; fair as the noon above
The world of shadowy leaves that whisper and
play,

Where I, beside her sitting, sing away ;
A heart unburthening that never tires
In grateful utterance of fulfilled desires ;
And passionate longing not to be betrayed,
Onwardly urged, enjoyably delayed !

“ ‘I laud, I laud in tenderest strain, and trill
The rapture in thy rounded eyes, that fill
My fond heart full, such lustrous orbs are thine
To beam upon me with their love divine !
Divinest love : in silent transport there
Patiently brooding on thy treasured care ;
Each warmly cherished fivefold counterpart
Concentred safe beneath thy happy heart,
That soon astir, will feel the throbbing beat
Thro’ broken walls, responsive and complete !

" O bliss to eager breasts ! The bliss, when first
From riven and shattered azure mansions burst
Our long-lovèd hoped-for joys ! Starkly in view
Pale-pink, and shuddering 'mid the fragments
blue !

How brief the yearning glance thou wilt allow,
In thy fluff-feathered, fostering zeal, I know
Truly, O Love ! But when thy callow brood
Stretch wide their yellow mouths agape for food,
My fondness then will overhanging doat
While filling wistfully each tittering throat.

" " When flush and fashioned they have outgrown
home ;

And duly feathered fit for enterprise ;
Luring them craftily with thrilling cries
To trial of their timorous wings, we roam
Hushed unfrequented hollows, hour by hour ;
Then, as their little limbs wax lithe in power,
Thro' dewy grass we follow shining trails,
And finding, pounce upon the wanderer snails,

66 CHARICLO, TIRESIAS, AND BIRDS. [PART II.

Then crush their spiral palaces, and slay
The rich inhabitants, our unctuous prey.

“ When strong and capable, they seek to dare
Whatever chances fly 'twixt dawn and night,
We drive them from our haunts to forage, where
Conquering the risks of danger with delight,
They shape to comely creatures. When wild
spring

Bursts into bright innumerable green,
Thro' silvery showers and sunshine widening
On wood and copse throughout the boundless
scene ;

Impassioned then clear from the gathered crowd
Of flitting wings, shall rise their voices loud !

“ Apart on loftiest boughs we'll hear them sing,
Pouring their rivalries from dulcet throats,
Sustained in long successive throbbing notes,
Liquid and flashing ; while the woodlands ring
With flattered leaves playing choral minstrelsy ;

When many a sidelong ear, a glancing eye
Will scan the singers while they list their lays ;
And then, in prompt unhesitating praise,
Fluttering around they all alight anear
For sweet selection of the mates most dear.

“ As both, O Darling, in the days ago,
Were pleased and fluttered, when, becoming one,
The sun for us threw wonder in the leaves ;
And winds blew sweeter thro’ the swifter day.
My heart then filled with love, on summer eves,
Thy charms in music running thro’ my lay,
Feeling far lovelier things than I could say,
I sang no rising sun could ever see
In tangled greenwood or on noblest tree
A bird so beautiful to rival thee ! ”

“ His lay confined to praises of his dame,
And what she loves : what fitter theme for song !
With what high argument, Tiresias,

68 CHARICLO, TIRESIAS, AND BIRDS. [PART II.

Rend they the air, yon cloud of heavy rooks,
Now holding troubled session in the sky?"

"Driven by mischance from wonted feeding-
ground,
They shout and boast their prudent management
And rearrange some disconcerted plans.

"' Car-r, caw-w, we live by law ;
Caw-w, car-r, a toiling crowd
Seeking grubs, or eating grain,
Haunting hollows, over plain,
And flocking furrows ploughed.

"' Arisen from darkness when the sun adorns
Awakened earth on dewy summer morns,
Our penetrated feathers gleam and glow
In purple splendour shifting, like the bow
Born of bright showers all little children know.

"' When our battalions load the darkened air,
And clouds are turbulent, dull herdsmen stare,

To weave our movements into prophecies,
What time in fury gloomy storms shall rise
And plunge with fire and thunder thro' the skies.

“‘ Simple are hinds ; O, often have we laughed
To see them slowly creep with bow and shaft
To end our need of feeding while we fed ;
Unwitting any watcher overhead
Had made a signal when away we fled !

“‘ But evil are they ; oft some dreadful sin
Charging against each other, they begin
By hurling curses from their haughtiest breath,
Ere each with sword or axe encountereth
And hacks and hews his opposite to death.

“‘ We live by law. We punish evil tricks,
As they discover who purloin the sticks
From nest of neighbour ; for, the theft made plain,
Warned are the sinners once ; but if again
They're caught while sinning straightway they
are slain.

70 CHARICLO, TIRESIAS, AND BIRDS. [PART II.

“ ‘ When for debate at eventide we rise
Should eagles gaze down from the tranquil skies
Upon us purposeful while hovering high ;
Clamorous, and yelling with concerted cry,
We mass our forces on them rapidly,

“ ‘ Till flustered and confounded, they, affright,
Escape our uproar in precipitate flight !
Victorious, we float on our homeward quest,
Sublimely sailing upper regions blest
In the enjoyment of approaching rest.

“ ‘ Car-r, caw-w, we live by law ;
Caw-w, car-r, a toiling folk,
Closing eyes but in the night,
Labouring ever thro’ the light,
As oxen under yoke.’ ”

“ ‘Tis clear to man they pay scant reverence,
Tho’ round his homes they ever congregate.”

“ Yes, they despise but never scorn to use
The toil of men, born but to turn the soil
And lay exposed the luscious worms for them !
Strange notions move them : singly, each conceives
Himself a cypher ; but the commonwealth,
Ardent and daring, will they all uphold,
And their awakened anger in assault.
As they have boasted, even eagles flee ! ”

“ These shrewd substantial feeders will we
leave :

A more engaging life, Tiresias,
Yon lark, whose shrill rejoicing in the sky
Flatters attention with attuned reproach,
Singing in ears dulled by continual care :
The purport of his warbling would I know ! ”

“ As you may well divine, O Chariclo,
Few are the cares lodged in that buoyant breast :
His mate, the sunshine, and his little ones ;
His transport in the light when ether-poised,
The cadences that alternate his song ! ”

72 CHARICLO, TIRESIAS, AND BIRDS. [PART II.]

“ Farewell awhile, O earth, my gladness
Rising in delicious madness

Thro' the sunshine deigns no pause

Because

The wells of joy rise faster than my flight,
And overflow in sparkles of delight,

Around the air

And every where,

Till quivering downward tremblingly they fall
On gazing listeners, and their hearts enthrall.

“ She watches me, my mate, admiring
While higher yet I soar untiring,

Till evanishing in day's

Bright rays,

She can but hear a rapturous voice she knows
Her praises tuning, and with praising grows

Prouder, and sings

The tender things

Of her first shyness, my approaches keen ;

She best loves hearing as I sing unseen.

“ ‘ But love is lost in loftiest air,
The scenes of earth however fair !
Where, as often they distress
As bless.

I range the blue illimitable dome,
Smiling familiarity of home ;
Here I forget
The fowler's net,
And by immortal longing flushed, aspire
To ever mount, urged onward winged with fire !

“ ‘ But no ; tho' very heaven is near,
Temptations of the earth are dear !
I must take the pleasant heed
To feed
The mouths agape so wide and frequently,
With her cool sheltered under canopy
Of playful sheen
Where grasses lean
Over the little nest that rings her scope
Of happiness anear, and steadfast hope.

74 CHARICLO, TIRESIAS, AND BIRDS. [PART II.

“‘ Now sing I downward and behold
Her wings our callow young enfold.
In suspense I poise above
My Love,
Her soft contented eye upon me fixt ;
As shaking trills of exultation mixt
With plainings lone
Of something gone,
I chant of glory that may never come ;
Or come when wings are closed and utterance
dumb !

““ So peacefully she sits her nest,
Alighting would her calm molest ;
Therefore now again aloft,
Where oft
Have I beheld the sinking sun, I rise !
I bathe my being in these golden skies,
Where fire and gloom
Announce the doom

Of yet another day to sink in night,
Bequeathing traces of celestial light.

“‘ Now pallid gleams of twilight shrink
In dusk beyond the ocean’s brink ;
And from the ocean gloom assails
The vales,
And lies a level blank on tended crops,
And masses mountains to their wooded tops.
So I will cease
And, deep in peace
Nestle beside my Love to rest, and dream
My flight to-morrow hails the morning beam ! ’”

BOOK II.

TIRESIAS. SONG OF IMAGINATION.

A MIGHTY God, untouched of mortal pain,
I feel immortal youth within me glow ;
And Time, my servitor, commands the
Hours,

And their attendant powers
To sprinkle rarest beauty on my brow,
That wanes and blooms again
In splendour multitudinously bright,
Wonders of earth and air in circles of delight.

Boreas I mark on yonder rolling world
Awake and goad old Ocean till he raves,
And climbs in maddened masses from the deep.
Deluded ships, asleep,

One moment crested quivering on the waves,
 Are pitilessly hurled
Thro' dismal darkness, and stupendous roar,
And cast, unheeded wreckage, on some lonely
 shore.

Anon the boisterous God assails a town,
Driving the altar-fires in deadly streams
That rush and burst against the palace walls,
 And char the kingly halls!
While furnace-splendours mount in startling
 gleams,
 And, opal-tinted, crown
The temple flaming high, ere, with a flash,
All drops a huddled ruin, loud groaning in the
 crash.

Destruction forges sport for Gods at ease :
The rampant water, plunging leap of fire,
Welcome varieties that sate our gaze !
 Unless attention strays

Where Fortune, promptly flattering, our desire
For other sights to please,
Heaps up more treasure than our eyes may scan,
The plunder of all time encompassed in a span!

Alone. Unstirred by either hope or fear,
While past the teeming generations fly,
I will be God no more! Again I feel
Soft pity thro' me steal,
As mounts that shipwreck-yell of agony
From hopeless death so near,
And shrink in horror as that molten flood
Enwraps the shrivelled crowd while shrieking in
their blood.

Now, as a king, I love my people well,
And morn by morn implore the Gods for grace
To lead them duly by continual care
To brightest issues, where
Contentment smiles a life-long resting-place,
And every one shall quell

The zest for vantage at another's cost,
That tells, tho' great the gain, of something
greater lost.

Their sunny faces smile along the street ;
And in my palaces I often list
Whisper of women, "Child, here comes the
king!"

And one will boldly bring
Her curly-headed Eros to be kissed ;
Or, worn-out warrior greet,
And I, remembering his strong days of yore,
Make smile his wrinkled cheeks in tears be-
dabbled o'er.

Again I change, that I may feast on crime,
And breathe an evil king ; but love my slaves
As stoat the rabbits, and a wolf his sheep.

I count before I sleep
How many vessels on the bounding waves
Support my state sublime ;

And throb with joy that multitudes must strain,
Their utmost famished strength to swell my
regal gain.

I move in splendour ; shrinking figures bend,
Awe-stricken by the glancing polished arms
Of my stern guard ; when, should I haply spy
Among them standing by,
One of rare beauty in her maiden charms,
I smile, they apprehend ;
And, loth or willing, she is haled away
To wonder, pretty trembler, what a king may
say !

Man's blood alone ; blood only can appease
My thirst for drinking to the depths of power.
I make selection from the rich I hate,
And prove by legal prate
They violated in some secret hour
Immutable decrees ;

When swiftly executed judgments bring
The wealth and wished-for ease ; sure proofs
that I am king !

Go, kings ! I blaze a hero great in might,
And treasure gathered of unnumbered foes.
Astounded powers fall doting at my feet,
Whom graciously I greet,
And, as a gardener plucks a tended rose,
I take command by right ;
Direct their marches on unconquered lands,
And, shouting, back return fresh banners in our
hands !

Sweet is repose ; and slumber yet more soft,
After the onslaught of an angry day ;
But sweeter still the Dionysian cup,
When filled and bubbling up
Fuller than brim, till golden streamlets spray
The ruddy hand aloft

To hail the vineyard-toilers' noble craft,
And, deeply breathing, drink a vineyard at a
draught !

But what are shoutings of victorious strife,
Or golden bowls of red and golden wine,
If matched with throbbing of a woman's heart,
When eyelids brightly start,
And lips, divinely soft, own love divine ;
Enrapturing our life,
To loftiest eminence of honour won,
The glory on our way outshining moon and sun !

Whatever dwells within created bounds
Am I, or have been, or I dream to be !
The sullen monster haunting river slime !
In laughing summer time,
Among the flowers the fair one fluttering free !
Or, where great ocean sounds,
The watchful seamew winging sapphire day
In ceaseless airy circles plaining for her prey !

Now, a male serpent, beauty's warmth I clasp
In coils so lovingly around her grace,
My tightened pressure stays her failing breath,
 And hints approaching death ;
Then, ere the blushing roses leave their place,
 And she escape my grasp,
Storming, my rapture thro' her faintness burns
In maddened kisses hers with quickened breath
 returns.

I am a Nymph ; I love a God, and saw
Him kiss a river Naiad tenderly,
Smiling more brightly than the sun on snow.
 I heard him whisper low
Unto her, shameless ! Timid, meek, and shy,
 And melting as the thaw,
When noontide-smitten over pasturing hills
The loosened snow slips down, flushed to a
 thousand rills.

I would have crouched at his immortal feet,

Writhing resplendent gleamings, fold on fold,
Around his shapely limbs in gradual slide,
His fast-united bride !
And quick in ecstasy had clenched mine hold,
Till both our bosoms beat
One measure, as I crushed his strength in mine,
When, tho' he moaned for pain, my triumph
was divine.

Serpent, away ! Relax thy gorgeous wiles,
Nor prey on unsuspecting innocence.
Now would I woo disdainful quietude,
That face-averting prude,
Who truest lover ever shuns, or hence
Mocks him with fleeting smiles !
But, scorned, I doubt her countenance, and range
Free as the wind of heaven in never-ceasing
change.

Then come, O joyous Freedom ! Fold thy wings,
To lay thy face on this too-happy breast,

That I may lull thee mine with tenderest song
 As quietly along
We glide together where the molten West,
 Wealth-overburdened, flings
Largess of burnished gold my wavelets leap
And catch to drop again down wasteful in the
 deep.

For now a River pleasantly I pause
Awhile within a deep pellucid pool,
Whereon a sunlight-star flickers and burns,
 Or, vanishing, returns,
To flash aslant and gild green sedges cool
 In momentary flaws.
Then murmuring on between my banks I slide
Greeting the stately rushes ranked on either
 side.

Aglow, illuminating meadow green,
Naked as new-born, wind-tossed flowers, are
 thronged

Loveliest of frolic maidens chattering loud,
In youthful beauty proud ;
Who, by delay, thro' golden warmth prolonged,
Are favourably seen
As they, each other pushing, laugh and urge
To the first plunge while lingering on the grassy
verge ;

Till, in my waters plunging, one and all
Tingle my very depths. I clasp, surround
Their shapely forms, round throats to dainty
feet,
With hold so closely sweet,
I know a lover's transport never found
But sweets transitional
Compared with my delight, while in mine arms
Their every grace enjoyed of all their varied
charms.

My tide must flow, or lingering still would I
Enjoy their beauty, ere the beauties don

Their daily garments and deflower the light.

While some blushed rosy bright,

Or golden-tinted, or tall lilies shone,

Some gleamed like ivory ;

And others had in smouldering summer grown

Brown as autumnal tones when nuts come pat-
tering down.

Broadly and strong I run my destined course,

Thro' wooded gloom where prowling creatures
roar ;

Crags, vast and lofty, eagles only scale,

And weaker pinions fail ;

I near at length the ocean's sounding shore

Where, wrathful billows hoarse,
Frothed by vain howling would devour the
land,

But shriek and fall abashed with frantic stones
and sand.

Thro' the mad waters rushing, mine compact,

Maintain their penetrating underflow
And sound the solemn dells of mystery.

Meanwhile in dreams I lie
Uniting languidly with brine below,
My very being slacked
And drifted thro' a wilderness of caves ;
But with the morn I wake and dance on sunlit
waves !

I rise, I quiver, I exhale in clouds !
Our bright ascension silvering woos the sun,
And trembles into vagueness at his gaze.
His ardent scorching rays,
And unendurably keen darts to shun,
We huddle close in crowds
And bid the winds, our coursers, speed to land,
Our cheeks, back-turned aglow, touched by his
farewell hand.

Transcending fertile valleys in my flight ;

And over woodland heights to wind-swept
plain,

Where men and beasts uncounted plod and toil
To overcome the soil,

With scythe and plough ; their daily needs to
gain,

Wage life-long stubborn fight ;

There hang I resting spread abroad in one

Far-reaching veil of mist between the earth and
sun.

The march of thunder-tempest rolling nigh

Precipitates me shattering to the ground

A drenching downpour, for a moment hushed

And lost in yielding dust

That chokes each gurgling crevice, muttering
sound

As tho' complainingly,

The soaking wet, they longed for oft in vain,

Now, like an angry God, o'erwhelms them with
disdain.

Glazed by mysterious moonshine in the night,
My waters sob for joy thro' every slope,
But linger on the level stretching wide
 Till from the sheer cragside
They rush, as compassing divinest hope,
 And dash in mad delight
Commingling with the mountain-torrents' force
That plunges mightily along its rocky course.

The heavens are bare. I am a myriad rills,
Rillelets, and streamlets hastening all adown :
I fall in evedrops on the shepherd's brow
 When forth he ventures slow,
Hoping perchance, untended and alone,
 His sheep among the hills
Had taken shelter in an ancient cave
Deep-clefted in the rock, their timid lives to
 save.

By countless tributary courses fed
My waters wash the rushes shoulder-high,

And bend their graceful heads where wavelets
 surge
 Lapping the sodden verge.
Down my loved channel yet again might I,
 By other fancies led,
Watch other pictures as their beauties gleam
Bright from my peopled banks and glorify my
 stream.

But farewell river! Once again with men!
My dimpled fingers on my mother pressed,
I drain the primal nourishment of strength
 A satisfying length.
Crooning old tunes she fondles me to rest
 In gentle slumber, when
She fondly smiles to watch me dream and smile,
And oft down her fair cheeks are trickling tears
 the while.

Anon her hest, or terrifying threat,
Promise of apples or a longed-for toy,

Proscribes the fishpool, and forbids the trees
That I can climb with ease ;
And every gambol I would fain enjoy,
By her concern is met
With kisses undesired, and shown, if done,
As some unheard-of wickedness that shames the
sun.

But O the rapture when my father cries
" Boy, take my shortest bow and hunt with me !"
I am another than myself ; my pride
Bounds in a bolder stride ;
My beard is curling ! I already see
Strong men, without surprise,
With bluff familiarity demand
That I should leave my home to join their hunter
band !

There lies a hollow in the hills, where sound,
However sweetly trilled, would stir the calm
And silent noon, and come unbidden there
To wake the sleeping air :

And worship, breathing an unspoken psalm,
Absorbed in gazing round
The domed refulgence of a summer day,
Would hoard the glory time could never take
away.

The solemn splendour, when at eve I roam
A lonely way above our purple vale,
Wraps me in curious musing how the Fates
Control the course of states ;
Until perplexed assumptions halt and fail,
When, bending footsteps home
At close of day, in the sad light of stars
I feel their tender beauty shine reproach on mortal
jars !

I love the young Dione, and, alas,
I cannot say she loves ! Where might I find
One whose well-studied comeliness could vie
With her simplicity ?
Gracious is she to me ; low-voiced, and kind ;
And flowery summer grass,

Beloved of all, grows not more innocent
Of lofty downcast looks where cold disdain is
meant !

I hold her unresisting hand in mine,
Lingering in hope a maiden dawn will rise,
To show the folded flower has raised its head
And blossomed rosy red.

Ah no ! yet lily pure her cheeks ! Her eyes
In steady candour shine,
Tho' my warm kisses tremble on her mouth,
Sweeter than jasmine bloom, or roses of the
South !

Playing I sit where shadows interlace,
And time the pauses of my oaten stem
In varying measure, as the song she sings
Melodiously rings
And quivers ; when, like an engraven gem
She stands in clear-cut grace,
Against the calm of an inviolate sky,
Whom thus to see again I feel that I could die !

Her hands against an oak, that overspread
A quiet water, I behold her lean
To watch her pictured self. "No form divine
 Could be compared with thine,
Save that, Dione, there beneath thee seen!"
 She sidewise lifts her head;
But ah, the rippling laughter is but play
Of freely flowing streamlets glittering and
 away!

How can I win Dione? Hear my prayer
Ye powers above, ye wise ones of the earth!
So nearly mine she seems; yet shines on high.
 Cold as the morning sky!
What can I do to win her? What of worth?
 For grimly would I dare
Encounter foulest dragon her to please;
A monster huge as any slain by Heracles!

She still withholds her love against my sighs,
A love whereon I brood as birds at rest!

My arms entwining her perfected shape,
She does not me escape,
But drops her own arms folded on my breast,
Looking with tender eyes ;
But in their droop burns no bright answering fire,
No liquid flash or sparkle soothing my desire !

Once on a day we two together sped
Across the coppice outskirt where a wood
Bore heavy crops of wild autumnal fruit ;
Both diligent and mute,
We brimmed our baskets full of forest food ;
When ceasing toil, I said
' Behold yon sapphire mountains drowned in
crowds
Of mimic mountains floating upward clouds on
clouds !'

And while I spake a cold damp gust of wind
Smote us with passing chill ; and whence it came

Was dim and darkened, and I knew the sign.

“ A storm, Dione mine,
Comes fast upon us filled with flood and flame ;
And scant the time to find
A shelter for our lives ! ” I found a knoll
Thick grown with saplings, ere we heard the
thunder-roll,

And felt a few sharp drops. Then, bending low
Some young trees, twisting their lithe branches
tight,

I bound them fast in withes Dione made
With serviceable aid ;
Then promptly drew my sharpened blade to fight
Our danger. At each blow
A graceful sapling fell ; and as they fell
She bore and piled them close around our hasty
cell.

No king, to save his kingdom, could have hewn
His foes more stoutly than I felled my friends !

But hints, unneeded, urge the need of haste,
For thundering up the waste
The storm rolls nearer, and the forest bends
Like windy grass in June ;
Hither and thither wild gleams hunt the plain,
And swirls between long moanings bright-
teethed hissing rain.

Tree-tops I interlaced, and forced their stocks,
As if for growing, in the solid ground ;
Then bent them down aslant against the stress,
That now began to press
And charge with fierce assault our little mound,
Where held the hut, as rocks
Whereon the waves run free and burst in foam ;
The tempest tight'ning more our tree-protected,
home.

Scarce had Dione cowered beneath the leaves,
Before the distance vanished in a glare.
With roar stupendous full the horror burst,

As tho' the earth accurst,
Were being shattered into blackened air !
Reverberating heaves
Of weightier thundering threatened instant
doom,
And intermingled lightnings fiercely lit the
gloom.

Safe in close shelter at Dione's feet,
Her terror so exultingly I cheered
By proud recital how we beat the foe,
She could but smile. When lo,
Past flew a meteor, with a flaming beard
Of swift sulphureous heat ;
And struck afar one solitary oak,
That, in a blinding instant, flashed to fiery
smoke !

A staring desolation splintered lay
That ancient oak, whose branches overspread
The water where sometime Dione leant

To watch her picture, bent
Answering her gaze ; before she raised her head
A merry sidewise-way,
Laughing to naught my laudatory words,
As any brooklet might the singing of the birds.

“ Behold Dione, thine own honoured oak
Thy both hands pressed, when looking down
below
The beauty of thy smiling face to see !
Then let me, loved one, be
Thy sure support ; ah, let me, dearest, know
At length I have awoke
Thy sleeping love, that has slept overlong,
Tho' summon'd to my joy in many a sorrowing
song ! ”

Down with a drench the rain like mountain
streams
Dashed on our refuge, fluttering from the sides ;
Sluiced to an island shrank our little knoll ;

We saw the waters roll.
And saw the vapours pass with giant strides,
Where transitory gleams
In cold dull sadness broke the vaulted air
That showed the land, rain-covered, lit with sullen
glare.

Dione clung to me ; her maiden heart
Beat like a fluttered bird's. I held her fast,
She dropped her trustful face upon my breast,
And closed her eyes in rest.
“ Ah, could this bliss for ever, ever last ! ”
I sighed : when, wide astart,
Her eyes were fire ; she gazed into mine eyes
Liquid with passionate light that stormed me
with surprise.

“ Thou canst not ask me what I will not grant,
For I am thine, O love, as thou art mine ;
My love has ripened in the lightning fire,
And all thou wouldst desire

Bows to thy feet, as to a sacred shrine ;
And should'st thou, dear Love, want
My breast for shield against a fatal dart,
Then smiling would I welcome death into my
heart !

" I cleave to thee O loved one, true and strong ;
And tender as a summer dawn when dews
Soften the full-blown rose ! My heart being
thine,

As thine so dearly mine.
Should'st thou now ask of me ' Why then refuse
What was my due so long ? '
I would reply ' It was not I, not I
Could give its sweetness to the apple hanging
high !

" ' For apples born of blossom on the bough
Swell day by day and wane not in the night,
But ripen not for longing. As the sun
Doth glowing courses run,

By showers increased, by sunshine burnished
bright

They blush in beauty ; now
Fragrant and ripe, unneeding hasty clutch,
But mellowed sweet and soft are taken with a
touch ! ”

“ O more than music are thy words to me !
And should they warble nought then nought
were well,
And gracious songs that still should make me
glad !

O my Dione, sad
Had been my fate hadst thou lacked grace to tell
The love I failed to see,
And why so long in sorrow doomed to wait
The melody of triumph that sings my happy fate !

“ Like coupled birds together, wing to wing,
Breathing the incense of the flowers below,

Now will we watch the shining clouds on high
Unite the earth and sky.
While songs of rapture shall the vale o'erflow,
And make the woodland ring,
Telling a wonder that outshines the sun,
Two lovers warmed by love inseparably one !”

What fired the rapture of my tremulous kiss ;
Or, when warm kisses faltering ceased in sighs,
Cheek fast to cheek, inspired the murmurous
moan
For deeper joys unknown ;
But joy exhaustless that I saw arise,
So rich in promise, this
Blessed hour but played a prelude to the song
That my delight would hear full-voiced my whole
life-long !

Absorbed, remembering olden days gone by,
We shaped futurity as both desired ;

Then, as from far-off dreams awoke, amazed
 To see, as forth we gazed,
Where soaring slow a wide-winged falcon gyred
 A pure transparent sky,
And eyed, where dusky on the cloudless West
A line of following fowls beat homeward to their
 rest.

The world awake in lustre laughed and shone ;
And brilliant topaz every growth bestrung.
In sudden lusty simultaneous voice
 All singing throats rejoice ;
For overhead no more the falcon swung,
 To fatter regions gone ;
While balmy lisplings in cool silence cease,
As sweets on sweetness passing pause to whisper
 ‘peace.’

Unwillingly we left our cherished nest,
Where love was kindled in Dione's heart,
And mine augmented in Dione's flame.

But nimblest words are lame,
And fail or stumble when they would impart
How deeply we were blessed ;
How vast and wondrous lay the world around
As lingering home we paced its glory on the
ground !

In fire and tempest was Dione won.
But had Dione, issuing from the morn,
Stepped from Aurora's golden chariot, where
I stood expectant, there
In soft commingled sweetness newly born
Of blossoms breathing sun,
Exhaling odour and collected dew,
Her advent had not shone more wonderful and
true.

Thus I Dione won. Recasting o'er
My life of labour, mixed in battle grim
With cruel foes ; I feel my wedded time
Has been one lengthened prime

Of ample measure rising to the brim,
 O'er-lapping either shore ;
By many a freshet fed, by many a rill
Thro' misty upland drawn from many a trickling
 hill.

Our sons are stalwart ; daughters tall and
 fair ;
And all brisk harvesters of ripened corn.
Sons, subtle in pursuit and certain, bring
 Abundant offering
Of slaughtered creatures in the forest born.
 Our toil their sisters share,
And deftly weave the spun wool-yarn, inwrought
To varied comely garments pranked with graceful
 thought.

After the garnering, when prudence sleeps
One-eyed, and breaks in boundless merriment ;
Gaily our shepherd lads and hinds advance
 With vineyard girls, and dance

In nimble intricate confusion blent,
That even footfall keeps
To clash of cymbals and the screaming pipe ;
Sly kisses meanwhile snatched from willing lips
and ripe.

The dances ended, thronging round the feast,
All to the gracious Gods libation pour ;
Demeter first, great Dionysus next ;
But any make pretext
To fill their bowls to fullness running o'er ;
Then, filled with flesh of beast,
And garrulous with vintage, man and maid
Wander away to boast and carol in the shade.

Dione's stately daughters, young and tall,
And graceful as the slenderest grass that bends
An airy head in bloom, are ever seen
Of less majestic mien
Than her, for when with them Dione wends
She beams above them all,

As morning on a bed of daffodils
When first her mighty rays throw lustrè on the
hills.

Dione's gentle greatness I alone
Duly can sing, and pluck the quivering chords
That kindle listeners in united strain
To shout and shout again,
With ringing voices and exulting words,
Till thrilling pulses own
No lovelier presence, and no loftier worth
Have ever beamed in such immortal light on earth !

Not till this beating heart lies still and cold
Shall I cease singing of Dione's care
When 'mid remorseless slaughter on the hills,
Where crimson ran the rills,
And arrow flights bore darkness thro' the air,
Where, thronging overbold,
Strove ruthless hordes to reach our peaceful plain,
There, pierced by grisly wounds, I fell among the
slain :

They brought me dying home, or thought me
dead,

Their haste not knowing ashy swoon from death,
And at Dione's feet me lifeless laid.

Dione, firm and staid,
Heard not their argument, but held her breath
And laid her anxious head
Fast listening to my heart. At length a sound
Murmured "He lives, my Ares, lift him from the
ground!"

Tho' scarcely heedful, dearly well I know
How lightly, airily her equal hands
Passed over cleansing my deep wounds, and
pressed

Them closely to arrest
The danger threatening; and with softened
bands,

Staunch'd strait the vital flow,
And swathed my mangled form; then softly
smoothed

My forehead till I passive sank in slumber
soothed.

So steadfastly she nursed me, all my pain
Was poorest payment for the secret force
Of rare and hitherto untested worth
My deep distress brought forth,
Continuous and unresting. In due course
It dawned upon my brain,
Her love heroically stifled grief
Through my long helpless state to give me full
relief!

For, bravely fighting by my side, he fell,
Our eldest born, her darling, her delight.
His savage slaughterer, and every son
Who fought beside him, one
By one I slew, each in his manhood's might.
Strange to both feel and tell,
But, as they dropt, each at a single blow,
I thought of that great day, when saplings I laid
low

•

As the great storm approached. When all were
slain,

Chieftain and kin alike ; turning my glance
To gaze an instant on my son in death,

I scarcely drew a breath

Ere my quick foes took vantage of their chance,

And where my son was lain

Their barbarous weapons gashed my limbs and
breast,

And falling by the boy I lay like one at rest.

Then like a whirlwind raged my people's wrath ;

And flashed their falchions like the driven hail

Battering down summer's herbage into waste,

In vehement fierce haste,

Borne by the summertide's tempestuous gale,

Till, like to swathes of mæth,

In ranks their hordes lay tumbled cold and
still,

And our men triumphed, shouting victory on the
hill.

Half conscious, unresisting, as in dreams,
A wasted remnant from the strife I lay,
Till Time, unheeded with Dione near,
 Made glimmering hope appear
To gild my dull stagnation day by day ;
 And as milk, quiet, creams
Its virtue on the surface, so my strength
Rose outward from within and healed my wounds
 at length.

Noiseless herself she kept all sound aloof,
Save that bright music sung outside our walls ;
Her constant tendance and the household calm
 Were to my spirit 'balm,
And gave me quietude to hear those calls,
 'Twixt neighbouring boughs and roof,
The little twitterers to each other made
While darting to and fro from sunlight into shade.

Urged by her fond desire, Dione thought
My strength returning one bright summer morn,

And led me faltering to the outside air.
Amazement filled me where
Hope's widest vision shining newly born,
With primal glory fraught,
Flashed in wild splendour thro' the earth and sky!
While beat the viewless wings of zephyrs passing
by !

She dared not weep for our beloved boy,
Never again, ah, never to be seen
Radiant with features deepened by the sun ;
The daily labour done,
Forward, with folded arms on knees, to lean
Describing in his joy,
Some merry jesting, or an awkward wile
Of shepherd wit, he told to make his parents
smile !

But when at length my strength returned, and I
Was mine own self again ; when I could bend
My stoutest bow, and hurl my weightiest spear,

And on her lay no fear
My health might once more fail ; this was the end.
In one long painful cry
She threw herself upon me, and she sobbed
And moaned, accusing fate of what she had been
robbed.

Of never-ending sorrow in the blank
Where beauty beamed so bountiful and fair !
Of gaps in daily life where never more
Can time the lost restore.
Of steady misery whose Gorgon stare
From places foul and rank,
With ever-present, ever-watchful eyes,
Now lowered a constant dread, an ever-fixed sur-
prise.

As lapsing time advanced Dione's grief
From anguish softened tenderly in pride,
And sang the morning stars as heretofore !
She loving, evermore

Wandered away at quiet eventide,
Where, for our heart's relief,
Our people raised a mound to bear his fame ;
Their simple way to grace and consecrate his
name.

Every sweet plant and flower of special hue,
His favourites there enriched his honoured grave.
In odorous profusion trail and twine
Bright blossoms argentine
Whose hearts are golden ; rosy flashes lave
In sunset fire ; and blue
Stars there are drinking heaven the whole day long,
And lulled to evening slumber by the linnet's song.

In sacred hours we loiter by him there,
And feel his presence not so far away
When brought before us in the stories told
Telling his ways of old,
His forest wanderings by the light of day ;
How, when the moon shone bare

And changed the stream to silver, he would stride
Along its craggy banks to watch the flowing tide.

Our youngest boy touching responsive strings,
Can strike the lyre in concert with his lay.

Too young to wield the sword, on battle fields

He stands behind our shields,

And safely there his nimble fingers play

A deathly tune that rings

In dreadful shrieks throughout the maddened
strife,

For every loosened twang sings to a foeman's life.

Tuning, he gazed as one who saw the dead.

Our daughters and their brethren resting near ;

Dione with her hand in mine apart.

But ere he tried his art

He craved of all there an indulgent ear,

" If it should chance," he said,

His " words should falter with the weighty theme

Of his great brother lost who vanished like a
dream."

“ His eyes were like a falcon’s in the field
 Burning above his shield ;
 No dove who softly coos
 Bowing to wife he woos,
 When shining iris-bosomed in the sun,
 Tenderer than our loved one !

“ Impetuous and vehement in fight ;
 He thought no more of flight
 From arrows than from rain
 That beats a thirsting plain
And soaks the herbage to their famished roots
 And cheers the languid shoots !

“ He the grim mountain king assailed and fought,
 And into measure brought
 His youthful with his foe’s
 War-hardened strength, that rose
To fullest fury as he struck the blow
 That laid our dearest low !

“ He should have shunned the king and faced the
 brood,
 When there his father stood
 So near ! For he alone
 Could hew the giant down.
Not dauntless cubs, but full-grown lions pull
 To earth the mighty bull !

“ But when our dear one's bones in dust were laid,
 With him went every shade
 Who paid the debt of fate,
 And entered Hades' gate :
Where now they pay the ghostly homage due
 To him their leader slew.

“ But ghostly fealty can please no more
 On Lethe's sullen shore,
 If ancient love remain
 And he desire again,
In blank despair, the faces loved of old
 He may once more behold !

" But if the dead, by sight to us unknown,
Can range the earthly zone;
Our loved one's vision bright
Would watch the sacred light
That beams from all now gathered here to praise
His deeds in mortal days.

" Too mortal then, alas ! immortal now,
With glory on his brow
That will not pass or fade
With memory into shade !
But glory ripening with our ripened years,
And nourished by our tears !

" Lyres yet unfashioned shall grow dark with
time,
Ere cease the golden rhyme
To ring the rapid pace
At which he ran the race ;
Ere struck down bleeding by his father's side
And passing in his pride.

"The drifting showers leave token o'er his bones;
And, as some creature moans
About the wilderness,
Seeking in dire distress
Her vanished mate; so sorrowing, moan and
sigh
The winds that travel by."

Our eyes were full, the singer's music done!
Dione calmly folded him in arms
That might be Hera's for their grace and size.
Kissing his mouth and eyes,
She soothed his cheeks, and told him her
alarms;
And bitter sorrows shone
Away in time remote, so lone and far,
They lay beyond her now in beauty like a star.

The moons and seasons flourish, change and
wane;
And duties ever following duties fast

Bear us along resistless to the close,
No mortal ever knows,
Till in an instant, lo, his life is past;
And he no longer fain
To seek the blessing he could never find,
Or shun the plague of ills that prey on human
kind !

Our daughters now have left the parent stem,
And dwell in wedlock with their chosen lords ;
Our sons have likewise homes apart and live
Blessed with all toil can give
In compensating grace. Their kingly swords
Maintain the diadem
Of gracious rule and plenty where they dwell :
Joy to their father's pride, as sign he taught them
well !

Our youngest son who bends the dreaded bow,
Yet animates the house that hailed his birth.
" Leave me one apple hanging on the bough ;"
Dione asked ; " for now

The rest are sped, wide-sprinkled o'er the earth;
My firstborn lying low,
Rathe smitten in the morning of his prime ;
Leave me the latest darling in my waning time ! ”

His children's laughter is our daily joy :
Their imitative ways our constant pride ;
They know so little, yet they look so wise !
With what a grand surprise,
At perilous favour asked, perforce denied,
Gazes the pouting boy
Who would be man, and scorns the reason why
He must not bend the bow and let the arrows fly !

Sweet the soft pressure of their finger tips
On aged cheeks, when they would coax from age
Some boon, erewhile withholden, by strong wiles
Of pretty pleading smiles ;
Neck bound by arms that will not disengage ;
Warm, kissing, flower-bud lips ;

When yielding, half-reluctant, comes a gust
Of potent argument, "We must ! We must ! We
must !"

Sweet when their little ways have gone awry,
To wind them gently from their sidelong course
By plain example shown, and lure of praise.
How proudly every phrase
Significant of growth and watchful force
Enriches memory !
And pride to know two generations wear
Abundance on their boughs when now our own
are bare.

So many battles have we fought, our foes
Are beaten back ; such numbers have we slain,
Their weakened tribes, grown weary of the sport
Against themselves, resort
To other outlets on some other plain,
Where they adventure blows

In hope of better welcome than they found
When we on them bestowed their fortunes under-
ground.

Therefore our waning days are days of peace,
And plenty beyond need. How gladly we,
When toil releasing them our children come,
Behold them enter home !
With talk of crops, and what we know to be
Assurance of increase,
We quicken maxims by familiar jests,
And edge our saws with laughter, sacrificing
rest.

When all are gone, how like a long-past dream !
And oft I wonder whether living things
Are living things beheld, or fancies thrown
From out ourselves alone :
For clear, remote, on visionary wings,
Bright beings often beam
In fuller splendour than the loved ones by,
However warm and rich the sunbeams on them lie !

Yet more than ever is Dione dear !
And as, both hands out-stretching, one when
 blind
Walks bent with timid knees to feel his way
 In the fair light of day ;
So forward wend my thoughts whene'er I find
 Dione wanting near !
But often, back to youth, my memory strays
To woo Dione in unwilling maiden days.

Again I see her laving at the spring,
And, bright in sparkling drops, she smiles and asks
If like a Naiad she should sink and dream,
 Within the flowing stream,
And float and drown where the sweet lily basks
 In many a silvery ring
Would he her faithful lover then bewail
Her loss, lamenting to the large-eyed nightingale ?

Within the cavern of an ancient tree
I saw her beauty gleaming in the shade

So perfect, that when loftily she spoke

“ I, Dryad of this oak,

Command this mighty king that awes the glade,

Kneel therefore, worship me ! ”

My native reverence the charge obeyed,

And humbly at her feet for gracious favour
prayed.

I watch Dione's stately footfalls now ;

The great Olympian calm that dignifies

Each movement, and I wonder if 'tis she

Whom, with lighted eyes, I see

Capturing the swift fawn as it wildly flies !

Yes, I remember how

Forward she sprang and clasped its eager neck ;

Then tamed it to obey her smile and lightest
beck !

But whether calm in tender grace as now,

Or wild and laughter-loving as of yore,

She ever seems to me a perfect flower

Seen at its sweetest hour !
Her affluent delights enrich with more
Than kingdoms could endow ;
And I, her lord, the guardian of her fate,
Enjoy Elysian bliss ere entering the gate.

I waver towards my setting. Well-loved friends
Come oftener than their wont, and soon askance
Talking of chill and damp, will deftly turn
Their questions how to learn
If sudden changes touch my health perchance.
Their tranquil language lends
Considerate gentleness to all they say ;
Or they in silence linger, wondering why they
stay !

Around my shoulders and my slackened knees
They wrap soft folds when rawness threatens
chill
From winds or rainy flaws. I sit and dream
Of old delights that seem

Like some afar-off battle on the hill,
 To one who only sees
The striving figures flicker without sound ;
And yet they nearer seem than all beheld around.

Between the lapses of my dreams I hear
Myself addressed by voices of our home,
That sound as spoken from a land unknown.

 And sometimes odours blown
Fresh and delightful from the garden come,
 When instantly appear
The flowers of childhood in celestial light ;
And I there hesitate between the gold and
 white !

Outside our walls I sometimes pause and lean
Upon my staff, and think the monstrous sphinx,
With mystic riddles rambling thro' her thought,
 Indeed had wonders wrought,
Had she connected the mysterious links
Of now and what has been ;

Shown us the boy a man of ancient years,
The man again a boy, fame ringing in his ears !

When strength I see confederate with guile
Seize and make prey of helpless innocence ;
When brutal wrong wreaks vengeance on the
right ;

Such deeds swim past my sight
As primal born antagonisms, whence
Issue the groan and smile ;
A seesaw balance of content and strife,
The common lot we share with all of mortal life !

Sweeter than triumph over beaten foes,
Plenty in store, or comfort round the hearth,
Are peace, and undisturbed tranquility.

Oft creeps the feeling nigh
Only adown low in the silent earth
Can we escape the woes
That hard beset us from our earliest breath,
And wage unceasing wars that end not till our
death.

Sitting alone where our dear first-born lies,
I heard a murmur when the sun went down
Whisper dark meanings as it shivered by,
 With languid moan and sigh,
Calling those joys our loved one might have
 known
 Impossibilities !
Questioning whither had flown that fiery zeal !
What could the heat inspire ! and after, what
 anneal !

Well I recall that cry, " Hail, hail, a son !"
For strange emotion wrapped me as in flame :
And when our first-born in these arms I took
 Strange bliss throughout me shook ;
And scarcely nearer rapture thrilled my frame,
 When I Dione won,
Than when, a gift divine, against my heart
The new-born wonder lay in which we both had
 part.

Merciful tears can sooth me never more ;
Too dry with age and weary worn-out days ;
Or, weeping, I should see his youthful prime
 Falling in flowery time,
And I fast by unable then to raise
 My blade to cleave the boar
Whose dreadful tusk ripped out the life I gave,
Until too late, alas ; alas, too late to save !

But in the wind I heard my first-born cry ;
And in my heart I felt his voice appeal !
Impetuous as of old, when he would bend
 More forward to attend
My legends, and I saw the interest steal
 In his unwavering eye ;
While on his face, whatever I might say,
As in a mirror, I could see the story play.

I now feel ever near, and, since that hour,
Nearer to him than unto either child

Of later birth, borne by the wings of force

Beyond mine outspent course.

In quietude, by tranquil hope beguiled,

I contemplate their power

As toil and turmoil of an eager chase;

A trouble to behold, a weariness to trace !

My sight tho' waning sees uncertain shapes

Moving mute-footed o'er my chamber floor,

Where muffled voices answer questions strange

Of "shortened breath," and "change."

Then thro' the stillness breaks a mellowed roar !

Darkness suddenly gapes,

And sucks me down unfathomably deep,

When I know nothing more than sinking into

sleep !

Awakening in glory newly born,

I would have darted toward some glorious star ;

But memory gently hinting of the past,

Reluctantly I cast

My glances downward on the earth afar,
And saw the golden morn
Gilding the silent tenement of clay
Whereby my life performed the part I had to play.

There lay my form as happily at rest ;
Calmly triumphant, unassailable !
Dione there kissing the cheeks and brow ;
The lips that smile not now ;
Holding the hand, whose clasp she knew so well,
Her head falls on the breast.
Sorrow alone is her's ; and heavy moan
Against malignant Fate she never may condone.

The mourners now march slowly to the place
Prepared for burial rites : our dismal claim
On those we love. Bearing the sacred bier,
First those of mine most near,
Fast followed by all offspring of my name,
And others of my race ;

Dione's kinsmen next. A rugged band
Stride the tall shepherds from the uplands crook
in hand.

With grass-bound sickles trudge the husbandmen,
And foresters, their axes glittering ; throng
The vineyard toilers, man and girl, in pairs,
And each a thyrsis bears ;
Bluff metal-men, the mixed array prolong,
Nursing their hammers ; then
Their workmen, ranking by my children's years,
And last appear a crowd with brightly shining
spears.

In reverence kneel the solemn multitude.
Like summer wind that ruffles summer's leaf
And stirs the ocean, heave their breasts around,
When slowly in the ground
They lay the armed form of their vanished Chief:
For, ancient custom rude

Decrees that he, who as a conqueror died,
Shall keep his bow and spear for ever by his
side ;

His strongest bow his hands alone could hold
And bend with ease, with many a chosen shaft ;
His weightiest spear, and balanced falchion blade
Are duly by him laid ;
His leathern belt, inwrought with subtlest craft,
Buckled and bossed with gold ;
Then spread they over arms, broad chest, and face
A wolf-hound's skin, an ancient favourite in the
chase.

Then past he in a twinkle from their gaze,
In clouds of glorious dust, that sunlit, spread
Upward to nothing in the trembling blue,
As those appointed threw
The covering earth upon the mighty dead,
Whereon their love will raise,

Beside his first-born slain, another mound
That following ages may his echoing praise
resound.

But when the dreaded archer with his lyre,
Stood sad and lingering by his father's bones,
Then, as expectant of some hoped event
All eyes on him were bent.
And when the prelude rose in ringing tones,
Fulfilling their desire
To laud their chief for ever fled away,
All sank upon the ground to list the singer's lay.

"Death alone, no mortal foe
Has struck the mightiest of our people low.
Tho' ruthless foes that feat had often tried,
So surely did his might bring down their
vaunting pride.

"He left us, but has left a store
Of splendid memories whereupon we pore

With warmly-cherished grief and throbbing breast,
The glory he achieved ere yet he sank in rest.

“ Whose cleanly tilth enriched the plain
With constant crops of such abundant grain ;
Such loaded clusters of the tempting grape ;
Whose numerous herds so throve and moved in
goodly shape !

“ His happy flocks, the signs of peace,
Clad in the downiest and whitest fleece,
Would lift their homely heads and cease to graze
To bleat a clamorous choral welcome in his praise !

“ Herdsmen, and toilers on the land,
Walked with the stride of men used to command,
Whose lives accordant with their leader's will
Ran singing on as sings a pleasant inland rill.

“ Their children, nestling in the grass,
Would lie in ambush where he wont to pass,

And rush upon him with a storm of flowers
That burst about his head in gold and azure
showers.

“What man has known a stauncher friend,
To weight his purposes, or rights defend,
Than he whose welcome as the midday shone,
When summer sapphire smiles and every cloudlet’s
gone.

“When swept a din adown the vale
That chilled our women’s hearts and turned them
pale ;
When mountain marchers made their barbarous
clang,
And dreadful echoes thro’ the rocky passes rang ;

“All ye who knew him best can say
How in his lion might he marched away
To dash the savage danger, and restrain
Their hordes from making way within our peace-
ful plain.

“ He met them and he beat them back
In ceaseless slaughter up their mountain track ;
For those who stood and fought were smit and
slain ;
The rest in terror fled, or hope of future gain.

“ Thus fell their chieftains time on time,
Till frequent carnage swept away their prime ;
Whose wan successors lived in cautious dread
Of one who had the boldest blood among them
shed.

“ Therefore in peace and wholesome ease
We laugh and labour when and how we please ;
We watch our children grow to man and maid,
And, nimble-footed, dance at even in the shade.

“ United let us sing and praise
The greatness of our Chief who fought to raise
His people from the gnaw of constant care,
To smiling plenty now, and future prospects fair !”

Dione in her sorrow weeps alone ;
Wandering enthralled along the golden past,
She dreams the melodies of days to come,
 That never could be dumb !
But wakens into consciousness aghast,
 When some familiar tone
Displays her garden desolate with blight,
The chambers of her mansion emptied of delight.

O great eternal Gods, for ever just !
I supplicate for grace with lowly breath,
Let now your gaze, in tender fall divine,
 Bend once again to mine ;
Bring my Dione from the chance of death,
 The drift of fleeting dust ;
Bring her immortal with her mortal charms,
O place her once again within these longing
 arms !

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